



The Enfield Historical Society Newsletter *February 2008 Edition*

Water Power

Water power was one of the earliest sources of industrial power. Grist mills powered by waterwheels were common sights where streams passed through villages. Raceways and turbines eventually replaced the primitive water wheel and are found in every modern hydroelectric power plant.

One problem with water power was reliability. If the stream or river ran dry there was no power. The solution was the dam. Not only did the dam allow storage of water for generating power during dry seasons, it also helped to control flooding during rainy seasons and even made shallow rivers deep enough to be navigable.



The Hazard Powder Company relied heavily upon water power for their huge Powder Hollow mill complex. Several dams funneled water from the Scantic river through a network of ponds and canals, raceways and finally turbines that powered individual mills. Water power was cheap and far safer than steam power for the manufacture of black powder. One stray spark from a boiler could mean disaster. Postcards showing these dams, including the Horse Shoe dam (above) and the Upper Dam (left) were popular souvenirs of Hazardville. All of the dams eventually washed out, victims of neglect and the 1938 and 1955 hurricanes.

Enfield Historical Society Winter–Spring 2008 Calendar of Events

- Monday,
Feb. 25, 2008** **Connecticut's Bald Eagles** – 7:00 P.M. *at Fellowship Hall, Enfield Congregational Church.* Wildlife biologist Julie Victoria from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Wildlife Division will present an illustrated talk on the Wildlife Diversity Program's efforts to restore Connecticut's bald eagle population. After spending decades on the endangered species list, bald eagles have made a comeback as a result of nationwide efforts – including Connecticut's – and have recently been delisted. Ms. Victoria has worked for the Wildlife Division for 29 years and she is currently assigned to the Division's Wildlife Diversity Program which encompasses animals that are not hunted or harvested, including endangered species. Her work focuses on species management projects for colonial water birds, timber rattlesnakes, raptors and federally funded projects for roseate terns, piping plovers, bog turtles, dwarf wedge mussels, and the Puritan tiger beetle.
- Monday,
Mar. 24, 2008** **Annual Dinner Meeting and Elections** – 6:30 P.M. *at Fellowship Hall, Enfield Congregational Church.* The evening will begin with a catered dinner. A short but important business meeting at which annual reports will be presented and elections held for the coming year will follow the dinner. *This meeting is restricted to members and their guests only.* Advanced reservations are required for the dinner only. Invitations and reservation forms will be mailed soon. Please call Gloria Miller at 860.745.3835 if you do not receive a reservation form by March 1st and wish to attend the dinner.
- Monday,
Apr. 28, 2008** **History, Lore & Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps Camps in Connecticut** – 7:00 P.M. *at Fellowship Hall, Enfield Congregational Church.* Author and historian Marty Podskoch will present an illustrated program on the Civilian Conservation Corps camps in Connecticut. "This is a special year for the program topic," says Podskoch, "because 2008 is the 75th anniversary of the founding of the CCC." The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began on March 31, 1933 under President Roosevelt's "New Deal" to relieve the poverty and unemployment of the Depression. Camps were set up in many Connecticut towns, state parks, and forests. Workers built trails, roads, campsites, and dams; stocked fish; built and maintained fire tower observer's cabins and telephone lines; fought fires; and planted millions of trees. The CCC disbanded in 1942 due to the need for men in WW II. Marty Podskoch is a retired teacher and the author of four books: *Fire Towers of the Catskills: Their History and Lore*, *Adirondack Fire Towers: Their History and Lore, the Southern Districts*, and *Adirondack Fire Towers: Their History and Lore, the Northern Districts* and *Adirondack Stories*. Marty also writes a weekly newspaper column, "Adirondack Stories" published in five Adirondack area newspapers. Presently, Mr. Podskoch is researching the Civilian Conservation Camps in the Adirondacks and Connecticut. He is keenly interested in meeting individuals who may have CCC stories to contribute to his next book. Mr. Podskoch will have all of his books available after the presentation for sale and signing.
- Monday,
May 19, 2008** **Regular Meeting** – 7:00 P.M. *at Fellowship Hall, Enfield Congregational Church.* Please note that this meeting is one week earlier than usual due to the Memorial Day holiday. Program details will be in the next newsletter and on our Web site (www.enfieldcthistory.org).
- May, 2008** **Our Museums Open** – Spring is coming! Volunteers are already working hard to prepare new exhibits at the Old Town Hall museum, the board of directors is planning more improvements at the Wallop School, and the Martha Parsons Trust is planning for this season's activities and events at the Martha Parsons House museum. Check our Web site (www.enfieldcthistory.org) for opening dates for all of our museums and for announcements for fun and exciting spring and summer events.

Programs are subject to change. Check www.enfieldcthistory.org or area newspapers for schedule and program changes and other event announcements. To find out if a meeting is cancelled due to weather tune to WTIC AM 1080 radio or watch WFSB channel 3.

But did you know...

While 2008 Presidential election candidates visited both Hartford and Springfield, none visited Enfield. In years past other candidates thought more of our town. Many of our readers probably remember John F. Kennedy's visit. Before that Thompsonville's railroad station was often a campaign whistle stop. But did you know that Thompsonville had another, more personal and lengthy presidential connection?

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., son of the President of the United States, found his first job at the Hartford Carpet Corporation mills in Thompsonville. After he graduated from Harvard his father required him to earn his own living. His exploits in the mills over the next two years were reported in newspapers all across the country.

"Teddy Junior," as he was often referred to in the newspapers, started work at the very end of September, 1908. According to some reports he started working in the office as a clerk. By October 3rd, however Teddy, Jr. was working in the wool department. There he spent "ten and a half hours each day [sorting] dirty wool according to grades." Later he would learn how to wash, bleach, and spin the wool. "Hands on" was the rule as he learned how to do every job and task, no matter how physically hard or unpleasant, in the department.

Teddy started work at 7 a.m. each day; his 50+ hour work week reportedly earning him a \$5 salary. Supposedly, Teddy, Jr. was required to pay all of his expenses from this salary – food, lodging, clothing, entertainment– everything. Despite his family's wealth, he reportedly did not receive any kind of allowance from his father. At first young Teddy (he was twenty or twenty-one at the time) stayed at the home of Alvin Higgins, vice president of the Hartford Carpet Company. Within a few weeks he reportedly moved to Robert King's house on Enfield Street. Perhaps that was when he started paying for his lodging.

Newspaper reporters frequently questioned Roosevelt, Jr. about his job. When interviewed during his lunch break on his first day in the wool department, one newspaper account quoted Teddy as saying "Gee, but that's enough to break your little back when you aren't used to it." Readers need not have worried too much about him, however, as the same article reported that Teddy then went off to "eat lunch with Alvin Higgins, vice president and general manager of the company." It is doubtful that many of the 3,000 other Hartford Carpet Company employees were invited to lunch with Higgins.

Young Teddy was promoted to the worsted room after less than a month in the wool department. His rapid progress was attributed to his aptitude for the work. His supervisors also spoke highly of his work ethic.

Teddy spent the next year or so moving from job to job and department to department, learning all the facets of

the carpet manufacturing business. Reports of his "exploits" became considerably less frequent until February of 1910, when he became engaged to Eleanor Butler Alexander. Teddy was working in the Axminster department at the time. The engagement was very big news, appearing in more newspapers than any of the Thompsonville stories.

Only a month after becoming engaged, the purpose of Teddy's time in Thompsonville finally became clear. On March 13, 1910 it was announced that "Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., will likely finish his work at the carpet factory in Thompsonville, Conn., where he is employed, in June, and will become manager of one of the corporation's western houses." The wedding took place on June 20th and shortly afterward twenty-two year old Teddy and his wife moved to San Francisco, where he took over as manager of the Hartford Carpet Corporation's branch house in that city.

So ended Teddy Roosevelt, Jr.'s time in Thompsonville. Just how much he had to make his own way is debatable, as he surely got his position through family influence or connections – either directly or indirectly – and his career at the mills was unlike any other employee's.

Finally, a postscript to Roosevelt's Thompsonville story: Teddy Roosevelt, Jr. ran for governor of New York in 1924. Democrats continually accused him of running "on his father's prestige." At a rally he replied "When I left college and went out on my own, my first job was in a carpet factory at Thompsonville, Conn. I was there for two years and there was no camouflage about the work which I did.

"My family always had the very sound belief that after a boy had been given as good an education as it could afford it was then the boy's responsibility to make good for himself. So when I went to the factory I received no allowance from home.

"As I recall it, I got board, lodging and washing done for \$5 a week and I had \$2 left to blow in on clothes, amusements, smoking tobacco and riotous living."

Candidate Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. wanted the voters to know that he had made his own way, even if that was perhaps more than a bit of an exaggeration. Still, then as today, a good candidate knows how to spin the facts to his or her benefit.

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What memories of Enfield can you contribute to this column? Do you know something about Enfield's history that others may not be aware of? Do you have information about any of our previous topics? Send your information to the Newsletter address (found at the end of the last page). Be sure to include the source(s) of your information, and then watch this column for your story and your name.

Historical Society Quiz – Answers & Questions

Last issue's mystery objects hang from an opening in the ceiling of the gift shop at the Old Town Hall museum. Correct identifications arrived from Eric Loos and Everett Baker in the same day's mail. Both identified the objects as fire hoses hanging from the original hose tower built when the Old Town Hall was used as a fire station. Everett's letter dates that usage from about 1910 to 1925 and Eric points out that fire trucks were actually parked inside the building at that time. We have at least one photograph in our collection showing the fire truck and firemen in front of the Old Town Hall with the doors that allowed the trucks into the building opened to show the parking bay. Everett goes on to explain that the "hoses were originally made of woven cotton. Once used, it was necessary to hang them in a drying area to dry the moisture inside the hoses to prevent rotting of the cotton fibers." Congratulations and thank you Eric and Everett.



This issue's mystery object is part of a piece of furniture. To make this difficult quiz just a bit easier, we will tell you that the object is located in the Martha Parsons House and the part shown is about four inches tall.



- 1) What is the object?
- 2) What is the piece of furniture that it is part of?
- 3) Where in Enfield did the piece of furniture come from?
- 4) What is the unique and important connection between the object and Enfield's history?

Send your answers to Mike Miller, 31 Bridge Lane, Enfield, CT 06082, or e-mail them to mkm-of-enfct@att.net. The answers to these questions and the names of anyone who answers correctly will appear in the next newsletter.

2008 Nominations

Most Enfield Historical Society officers and committee members are elected annually. Exceptions include the directors, who serve three-year terms, and Martha Parsons Trust committee members, who serve seven-year terms. The Nominating Committee (Tony Secondo, Ruth Maylott, Ted Furey, Gloria Miller, and Rose Sokol) has submitted the following slate of candidates for 2008. The election will be held at the Annual Meeting in March. Nominations from the floor are always welcome.

President: Anthony Secondo; **Vice President:** Audrey Ciccolella, **Recording Secretary:** Michael Miller; **Corresponding Secretary:** Joanne Wilson; **Treasurer:** Paul Batchelder

Board of Directors: 2008-2011: Ruth Maylott, Catherine Kriss, and a vacancy to be filled; 2007-2010: Gloria Miller, and a vacancy to be filled; 2006-2009: Dorothy Allen, Ted Furey, Rose Sokol

Auditors: Gloria Miller, John Wells

Finance Committee (Budgets, grants, and investments): President, Vice President, Treasurer, Everett Baker, Sonja Dean, and Mike Miller

Management Committee of the Martha A. Parsons Memorial Trust: Debbie Lenn, 2008-2015; Russ Meyer, 2007-2014; James Sherman, 2006-2013; Everett Baker, 2005-2012; Eleanor Schneider, 2004-2011; Richard O'Brien 2003-2010; Sheila Beaudry, 2002-2009

Museum Committee (Acquisitions and Display): Gloria Miller, Rose Sokol, Robert Sokol, John Gwozdz, Audrey Ciccolella, Mike Miller

Old Town Hall Restoration and Management Committee: Robert Sokol, Phyllis Tanguay, Philip Shea, Mike Miller

Museum Staff Coordination: Audrey Ciccolella

Wallop School Coordinators: Joanne Wilson, Nancy O'Konis

Program Coordinator - Winter Monday Nights: Volunteer needed!

Program Coordinator - Summer Sunday Afternoons: Anthony Secondo

Group Tour Coordinator: Anthony Secondo, Everett Baker

Membership: Celeste Dzialo

Publications: Mike Miller

Publicity: Audrey Ciccolella

Ways and Means: Audrey Ciccolella

APPOINTMENTS

Historian: Janice DeFoe

Hospitality: Rose Sokol, Phyllis Tanguay, Gloria Miller

A “Thompsonville” Challenge

Last issue we challenged our readers to name as many Thompsonvilles as they could. Surprisingly, nobody took up the challenge. Here is our list of fifteen other states with Thompsonvilles and the counties where they are located: Kent County; Delaware, Walker County, Georgia; Franklin County, Illinois; Jefferson County, Kansas; Washington County, Kentucky; Middlesex County, Massachusetts; Benzie County, Michigan; Hinds County, Mississippi; Sullivan County, New York; Washington County, Pennsylvania; Gonzales County, Texas; Piute County, Utah; and Racine County, Wisconsin. Some of these Thompsonvilles are small cities or towns. Some, like ours, are parts of other towns – Massachusetts’ Thompsonville is part of Newton. Some are no more than named communities on unincorporated land. Most are smaller than our Thompsonville – Texas’s Thompsonville boasts a population of only thirty! Other Thompsonvilles have disappeared from today’s maps – abandoned or renamed – including one in Monroe County, Missouri and one in Perry County, Ohio. It even seems that Sioux City, Iowa – or at least part of it – may have been known as Thompsonville at one time.

Our list shows that, while our Thompsonville is anything but common, Thompsonvilles in general are perhaps a little more common than expected. No doubt Hazardvilles and Sciticos are much rarer. How many are there and where are they located? Are any of our members from those villages up to the challenge? Send your answers to the newsletter address or e-mail address and watch the next issue for the results.

Dues Reminder

All yearly memberships expire at the end of March. You will receive your dues notice soon if you have not already received it. Please pay your dues promptly so that you can continue to receive the Society newsletter. This year’s dues notices include the increased fees recommended by the board of directors and approved by a vote of the general membership at the September, 2007 regular meeting. The Enfield Historical Society appreciates your continued support and reminds you that individual and family dues pay the cost of printing and mailing this newsletter, and help to pay for speakers and other programs. Contributing, sustaining, and other higher level memberships provide additional support for the Old Town Hall and Wallop School museums. Your dues are just one source of the tens of thousands of dollars needed each year to operate our museums, preserve our collections, and provide free educational programs for our schools and the general public.

Visit Us

The Old Town Hall Museum
 1294 Enfield Street
 Enfield, CT 06082
 860.745.1729
 Sundays May thru October 2:00 – 4:30 P.M.

The Martha Parsons House Museum
 1387 Enfield Street
 Enfield, CT 06082
 860.745.6064
 Sundays May thru October 2:00 – 4:30 P.M.

The Wallop School Museum
 1 Wallop School Road
 Enfield, CT 06082
 Check our calendar for open house dates

On the Web: www.enfieldcthistory.org

Contact Us

The Enfield Historical Society, Inc.
 P.O. Box 586
 Enfield, CT 06083

 E-mail: MKM-OF-ENFCT@att.net

Join Us

Be a part of the Enfield Historical Society! To join, send your name(s), address, telephone number, e-mail address, and desired membership type to: Enfield Historical Society Membership, P.O. Box 586, Enfield, CT 06083. Include a check or money order payable to “Enfield Historical Society” for the membership amount for your requested membership type from the list below. Please print clearly. Everyone is welcome!

Individual.....\$10.00	Supporting..... \$100.00
Family*\$15.00	Life** \$250.00
Contributing\$20.00	Corporate \$200.00
Sustaining\$40.00	Benefactor..... \$500.00

* Family memberships include children under 21.
 ** Life memberships are for individuals only.

The Enfield Historical Society Newsletter is just one benefit of joining, and is published in February, May, September, and November. Questions, requests, and suggestions about its content should be sent to:

Enfield Historical Society Newsletter
 31 Bridge Lane
 Enfield, CT 06082
 E-mail: MKM-OF-ENFCT@att.net
 860.745.3835

Water Power

Dams are not always built for generating power. Many are built to enhance navigation, and Enfield's biggest dam was built for just that purpose. Spanning the Connecticut River between Enfield and Suffield, the Enfield dam was built between 1827 and 1829 to divert water into a canal on the Suffield side of the river. Prior to construction of the dam and canal the rapids at Enfield stopped most boats. Some smaller boats and flatboats could be poled through the rapids when water conditions allowed. Most steamboats had to be unloaded and their cargoes transported past the rapids either on land or in smaller boats. The Enfield Canal or Enfield Falls Canal as it was also known (today we know it as the Windsor Locks Canal) eliminated this transportation bottleneck – except when the river and canal froze over in the winter!

Enfield's earliest remaining mill dam was built in 1828 by Orrin Thompson to power his first carpet mill. At 14 feet high and 118 feet wide the dam is not huge, but it had a huge impact on Enfield History. Had it not been built there would not have been a Thompsonville Carpet Company or its successors. Other factories and businesses might have developed, but would any of them have reached the scale of the Hartford Carpet Corporation or the Bigelow-Sanford Carpet Company? And, of course, there would have been no "Thompsonville." This postcard (right) shows the effects of a cold winter on Freshwater dam.



Enfield's biggest dam by far spans the Connecticut River between Enfield and Suffield. Built to divert water into a canal on the Suffield side of the river to allow navigation past the Enfield Rapids, the dam also became a popular shad fishing spot. Perhaps the man shown in this postcard view (left) was thinking about doing a little fishing himself. Today the canal's locks are inoperable and the canal is no longer navigable. The Enfield Dam has breached in more than one place and, while still a danger to the many small pleasure boats that ply the river, is only a ghost of its former self.